

NOTES AND QUERIES.

Mr. Arnold-Forster, in his very able and interesting article on "Naval Cadets" in your December number, has some remarks which seem to me misleading.

On page 763 we read: "The examination is undoubtedly of a high standard—higher, especially in mathematical subjects, than is generally required of boys of thirteen years of age."

As a matter of fact, that is the *minimum* age for entering the Britannia, so that the examination would be more fairly described as intended for boys of fourteen years of age. I cannot agree with Mr. Arnold-Forster that the standard required is above that of an ordinary boy of fourteen, and I should say that a good average public schoolboy will get in fairly easily with good work. I speak, mainly from personal experience, of boys whom I have passed in easily and whose acquirements I know to be very ordinary, but I can also appeal to *prima facie* probability. No one can be a candidate unless he gets a nomination. The nominations given are about twice as many as the vacancies to be filled. As they are given by influence, the chances are that each batch of candidates contains an average number of clever and stupid boys, and the boy who just scrapes in, being in the middle of the list, will be just about an average boy.

This, however, is not a very important point. The following sentence on the same page seems to me to involve a much graver error:—

"As a general rule, it will probably be found advisable to send a boy for a time to one of those schools, of which several are to be found in the south of England, where the naval examination is specially prepared for, and where teachers can be found who can show a boy not only how to arrive at correct mathematical results, but to reach them by the particular methods approved of by those who will subsequently have to be pleased."

Now, in the first place, what are these mysterious methods approved of by the examiners for naval cadetships and revealed to the mathematical masters of naval cramming establishments, but hidden from the distinguished mathematicians who are sure to be found not only in the great public schools, but in almost any secondary school of importance? I am not a mathematician, but if I were a high wrangler and a mathematical master in some good school—if some parent came to me and said, "I want my boy to get into the Britannia: I am afraid you will not teach him the First Book of Euclid and Algebra up to simple equations according to the methods approved of by the examiners, and therefore I shall send him to Mr. So-and-so's Naval Academy"—well, I hope I should keep my temper.

Surely the methods approved of "by those who have to be pleased" are the best methods, and the best methods are common property of the best

mathematicians and the best schools—not of any set of examiners. If the examiners reject the methods of "Hall and Knight's Algebra," for instance, they are simply unfit for their work.

But apart from this question of "methods," is not all the talk we hear about special schools and special tutors for each examination a great deal exaggerated? Latin is Latin and Algebra is Algebra; they do not change because the examiner changes. The *raison d'être* of "crammers," if they have one, is that the subjects required in the examination to be crammed for are not taught, or not taught up to the adequate standard, in the ordinary classes of schools. Thus I daresay if a boy wants to pass into the Indian Civil Service, it may be well to remove him for the last year or two from most schools, because he will require tuition different from that given in the regular classes. The standard required in many subjects—French, for instance, and history—is higher than that which the sixth form aims at, as a rule. The same may be true to a much smaller extent of Woolwich and Sandhurst. But it is not true of the Britannia. The examination for the most part is on the regular school subjects—Latin, French, Mathematics, and English Composition and Dictation—and the standard is that of an ordinary fourth or fifth form. It is true that the Scripture, Geography, and History are on a different footing; in the last two at least private tuition will be required, but the amount required is very small, and any respectable school would be able to provide the tuition needed for a small extra fee.

It is only a drawback, though an inevitable one, to the naval profession, that its members should be educated apart from the rest of the world from their fifteenth year. Why should we make this worse by isolating them from their thirteenth year?

Mr. Arnold-Forster will probably appeal to "results," and tell me that Mr. So-and-So has passed so many candidates. To all these appeals, and I hear them very frequently, I can only answer, Do you know how many he has failed to pass?

F. H. C.

I had the advantage of hearing Miss Emily Lord's suggestive paper on Kindergarten training at a meeting of the Westminster and Belgravia branch of the Parents' Union on February 7. As the mother of young children whose school education must soon begin, I was greatly interested.

The sympathy with child-nature shown by the Kindergarten system is now, I believe, very widely appreciated by parents for their *little* ones, but I have frequently heard mothers of older children say, "Oh, yes, capital while the children are quite young, but when they are older they have to learn on a different plan, and they are at a disadvantage among children who have from the first been taught in the old way."

Now this I am sure is a wrong notion, and I think many readers of the *Parents' Review* would feel much indebted to anyone who would give information as to how the Kindergarten methods are continued for children in their teens; how, for instance, such subjects as modern languages and history are taught, and where schools and governesses are to be found adopting these methods.

H.